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The impact of Enquiry-Based Learning on the first year experience of studentship : student perspectives.

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Case study research

- First-year students' experiences of Enquiry-Based Learning (EBL) on a year-long introductory theory module.
- Issues
 - Students mistakenly view learning as passive receipt of information delivered by lecturers.
 - Increasingly diverse students
 - Large classes
 - Pedagogic issues raised by 'boundaried, interdisciplinary subject areas. WTP (Meyer & Land, 2005) useful model to explore tacit assumptions about ways in which researchers (module tutors) approach research- demystify/make explicit research process, which often exists 'behind the scenes'.

Why Enquiry-Based Learning?

- EBL as means of introducing research-based teaching (Griffiths, 2004) into first year experience
- Inspires students to learn for themselves
 - Brings a genuinely research-like approach to learning the subject (Hutchings & O'Rourke, 2002)
 - Means of encouraging students to view selves as developing researchers
 - The learning processes inherent in interactive, dialogic models of learning similar to processes of participation in research (Brew, 2006)
 - » Mirrors working lives of academics: Academic communities of practice, peer interaction, collaboration, trying out ideas, seeing and debating different perspectives

EBL and 'Ways of Thinking and Practising' (Meyer & Land, 2005)

- Baxter-Magolda (2001) sees involving students in research-like activities as supporting them in developing sophisticated 'ways of knowing', increasing confidence and capability for independent thinking
 - Complex assumptions of knowledge stem from participation in mentored research experience, in which teachers teach the process of knowledge construction in their disciplines, and give students opportunities to practice

Framing introductory activity: Rationale introduced and explained to students

- Introduced students to module tutors' own research lives and communities
 - Children's Literature;
 - Learning & Teaching (MEDAL) <http://medal.unn.ac.uk/>
- Alumni visit (from Discovery Museum)

Project: Staged approach to enquiry

- Signs Childhood

- Students' involved in data collection- findings were 'published' informally in a Researchers' Forum set up on BlackBoard (Picasa/wiki)

- Field site visits

- Support materials developed

- Student Conference

- Work-in-progress facilitated by students from National Student Network
- Keynote speaker, booking forms, registration

Signs of childhood (Knights, 2005)



Students gathered data

Researchers' Forum established on e-learning portal

The screenshot shows the Northumbria University eLearning Portal. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, Organisations, Staff Get Help, Staff Development, Library, Student Services, Study Skills, SITS, and Content Collection. A left-hand menu lists various portal features, with 'Researchers' Forum' highlighted. The main content area displays an announcement titled 'medal Making a difference: Educational Development to enhance Academic Literacy'. Below this, a post from January 29, 2008, by Mei Gibson, outlines 'Task One: Signs of Childhood' instructions for posting images and text to an online gallery.

medal
Making a difference:
Educational Development to
enhance Academic Literacy

Visiting with children

VIEW TODAY VIEW LAST 7 DAYS VIEW LAST 30 DAYS VIEW ALL

April 01, 2008 - April 08, 2008

Tue, Jan 29, 2008 -- *Task One. Signs of Childhood. Instructions for posting images and text* Posted by: Mei Gibson

- Task One, as outlined in the module guide, involves your chosen image or images forming part of an online gallery (This is described as an E-portfolio submission).
- The images you collect of literal signs of childhood can be taken using camera or phone. The important thing is that they have to be in a format which you can put onto computer and then send via email.
- Make sure you include your name and a title/caption for your image or each of your images (typically a very short description and a place... e.g. 'pub sign, South Shields', or picking out a key theme and place 'Not Allowed, Sunderland') in the subject header, or in the body, of the email.
- The images should be sent as an attachment, or, if there are a number of images, as a Powerpoint, to the following member of staff... ruth.sutherland@northumbria.ac.uk

‘Signs of Childhood’ student research conference



CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING & LEARNING
ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

A model of the Student Research process (Hughes, 2006)

- Collection
- Selection
- Reflection
- Projection



Summative assignment

New views of studentship:

active learning

- *We'd expect the lecturer to tell us exactly what to do, expect loads of direction*



- *And our work went up on Blackboard, instead of just the lecturers'. It's our thoughts and our ideas so it makes it more personal. So you are more inclined to read it and remember what it meant, because you were more involved in making it.*

Low-stakes (Knight & Yorke, 2003) learning environments

- *It's the way their module is set up so you get feedback after every session. So you know at the end, "Right, I've done the best I can do. I've taken on board what [the tutors] have said." And so hopefully that should improve your mark.*
- *It's actually starting to formulate it in a way that makes sense and in a fun way and in a small group way that you feel comfortable with and then you'll find that different people will take it in different directions.*

The importance of peer conversation

- *The discussions...it's amazing! Hearing all of the different viewpoints...seeing how things develop*
- *Hearing everybody's answers you could see how differently people saw them. It was really interesting, and we don't do that in any other lecture.*
- *It helped a lot seeing how other people viewed it*

Developing self-evaluation skills

- *‘The first semester the same insecurities are running through every single student: ‘my work is not good enough’. Until you see somebody else’s, that you’re on the same track and you are all learning the same thing, that can really give you a big confidence boost and can make you think ‘I’m right on the right track’. But also if your work is not really that good, if you read somebody else’s it pushes you a bit more because you want yours to be just as good as theirs.’*

Student perspectives of research

- *“I thought research was a big thing to do, it required lots of people and money. I thought it was scientists and stuff. I know it’s not now. I know I can do it. It’s about being critical, looking at what other people have done, then finding a methodology and asking questions.”*

A sense of belonging?

- *“If I had come to an open day and was told that I would have to do a research project,I would be out the door! But I do enjoy [this] because I enjoy the way... they don’t sit there and just talk at you for two hours. You get feedback on the work you’re doing. For me it has boosted my confidence and knowing... I mean, I wouldn’t profess to be, you know, I’m not the best student in the class, but it has helped a lot.”*